



SCHOLASTIC

## News

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Scholastic  
The Magic

School Bus



# Plants of the Desert

I am watering this cactus, Ms. Frizzle. It looks very thirsty.



saguaro  
(sa-war-oh)  
cactus

Dorothy Ann, you don't need to give it water! The cactus stores rainwater in its roots and stem. All desert plants have ways to get water, even in their dry habitat.



1

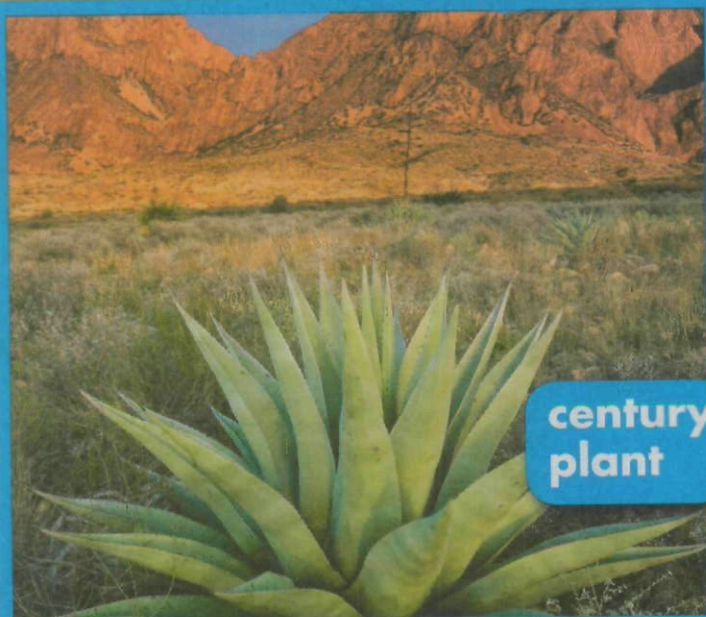


## KEY WORD

**adapt** (uh-dapt) To change in order to survive in a certain environment.

# Drink up, Desert Plants!

Like all plants, desert plants need water. They have adapted to live for many months without rain.

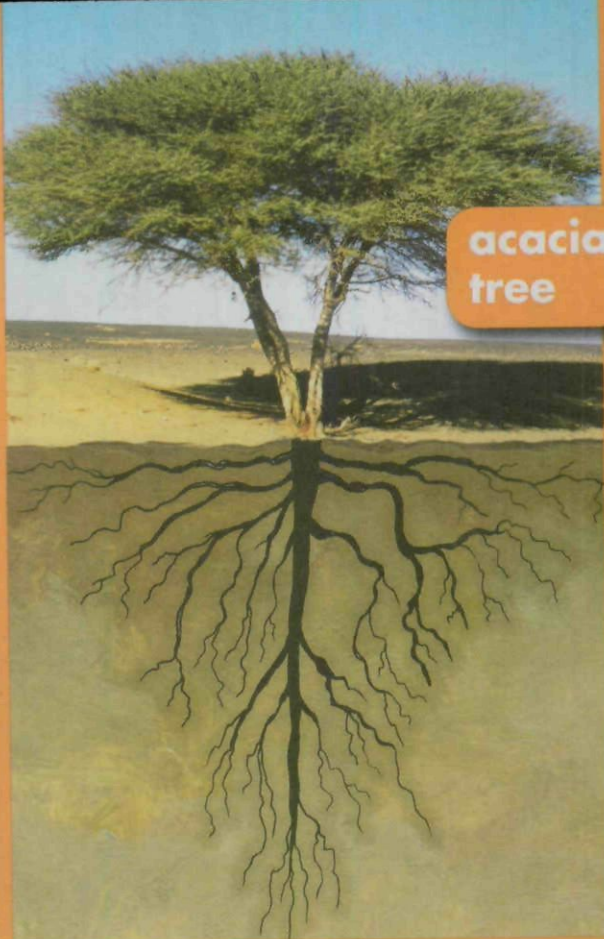


century plant

## Some plants store water.

This plant's roots soak up water after it rains. Then, the plant keeps the water inside its leaves. The plant will use the water when the weather is dry.

The leaves are very waxy on the outside. Water cannot get out of the leaves because of the wax. Many other desert plants have waxy skin and leaves, such as cactuses and aloe plants.



acacia tree

## Some trees have long roots. Some have short roots.

The acacia (uh-kay-shuh) tree has a long root called a **tap root**. It grows deep into the earth. It is long enough to get water that is very deep in the ground.

Other desert trees get water in another way. They have short roots that are close to the surface. The roots get rainwater as soon as it hits the ground.

With long roots or short roots, all trees get a drink!



## Desert flowers wait for rain.

Flower seeds lie underground. For many months, rain does not fall. When rain finally comes, the seeds sprout. Flowers bloom and fill the desert with color.

During this time, the flowers spread new seeds onto the ground. They sink into the soil. They wait underground until the rain falls again.

### Mexican poppies

The life cycle of desert flowers is very short. They bloom, spread their seeds, and die very quickly. Sometimes it all happens in just one day! That's because it may not rain again for many months.



## Desert Dessert

By Tim

Did you know you can eat fruit from a cactus? The **prickly pear cactus** grows a fruit that has very sharp spines. It is shaped like a pear, but it tastes like a kiwi fruit!



When the fruit is growing, it is yellow or orange. It turns red when it is ready to be eaten.



The prickly pear is food for desert animals too!

How do people pick a prickly pear? They pick it very carefully! People wear gloves when they pick the fruit off the cactus. Then, they have to pull out the spines.

After all that hard work, people eat the fruit. People can make it into jam or juice for a yummy desert dessert!

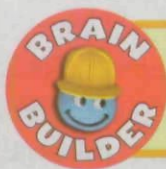


# Where Are the Deserts?

Use the map key to see where deserts are around the world. Fill in the bubbles for the correct answers below.



- Which continent has no deserts?  
☐ North America      ☐ Europe      ☐ Asia
- Put your finger on the Indian Ocean. Which continent with a desert is found east of the Indian Ocean?  
☐ Africa      ☐ South America      ☐ Australia
- The deserts in Asia are in which direction from the deserts in Australia?  
☐ east      ☐ south      ☐ north
- The Sahara Desert is in the continent directly south of Europe. Which continent is that?  
☐ South America      ☐ North America      ☐ Africa



Antarctica is a special kind of desert called a cold desert. It gets very little snowfall each year. Put a ✓ on Antarctica.

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